

Eaves' seat goes to Cal State official

12:35 AM PST on Wednesday, February 4, 2004

By SHARON McNARY / The Press-Enterprise

The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors appointed university administrator Clifford Young to fill the seat vacated by Supervisor Jerry Eaves. Young becomes the first black person to hold the post of supervisor.

He was chosen from among 14 applicants after making a sermonlike speech about his character that reflected his background as an ordained AME minister.

Young, executive assistant for government relations to the president of Cal State University San Bernardino, was nominated by Supervisor Bill Postmus, unanimously elected and immediately sworn into office.



Clifford Young becomes the county's first black supervisor.

His first words as supervisor were to thank his grandmother in Texas, "who I always know is praying for me in all that I do."

The seat opened Jan. 19 when Eaves resigned prior to pleading guilty to a felony conspiracy charge.

Politically active African-Americans have been pressing board members to appoint a black to the post, said Wesley Jefferson of the Westside Action Committee.

"This is history!" Jefferson said, recounting visits to Chairman Dennis Hansberger's chief-of-staff and to other board members. "All we wanted was a black, and a black came through that was immensely well-qualified."

Black Voice News publisher Cheryl Brown, former San Bernardino Councilwoman Betty Dean Anderson and former Cal State administrator Wilmer Amina Carter also had applied for the full-time job, which pays about \$91,000 plus benefits.

Young said he was unaware that others had lobbied on his behalf.

The four county supervisors who made the appointment are Republicans. Young, 57, is one of Sen. Jim Brulte's delegates to the state Republican Party. He declined to say whether he would back any of the candidates in the March primary election.

He said he is adamantly pro-growth, calling San Bernardino County's 5th District, "a diamond. It's rough now, but we can polish it."

About 54 percent of voters in the 5th District are Democrats and 31 percent are Republicans. Nearly 2 percent of the voters use a Spanish-language ballot, and three-quarters of those voters are Democrats.

The district includes most of San Bernardino, Colton, Rialto, part of Fontana and unincorporated Muscoy and Bloomington.

The San Bernardino Public Employees' Association backed the candidacy of Marge Mendoza-Ware, a Bloomington resident who serves on the association's board of directors and on the Colton school board. She is the Republican candidate in the 62nd Assembly District primary.

Two of the 14 applicants are candidates for the 5th District seat in the March 2 primary election, even though several board members had said that Eaves should be replaced by a noncandidate who could act as a caretaker for the 10 months remaining in Eaves' term.

"I ask you not to rubber stamp this appointment," said Fontana Councilwoman Josie Gonzales. "I am an applicant for this because change is essential."

Martin Valdez, Eaves' former chief-of-staff, also a candidate in the March primary election, told the board about his plan to create a "freight village" along Cajon Boulevard as a way of increasing the number and quality of jobs in the district.

Other candidates for the post included former Colton school board member Ray Abril Jr., Rialto resident Howard Leidner and Fontana school board member Laura Abernathy Mancha. Also applying were Leonard Pimentel of San Bernardino, former Fontana Mayor David Eshleman, Colton Councilwoman Kelly Chastain and county critic Jeff Wright.

Wright was the only candidate to receive endorsements from members of the public Tuesday. The homeless Air Force veteran was released from jail Monday following his arrest Sunday on a charge of assault on a peace officer that Wright said is unjustified.